DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 949 UD 026 177

AUTHOR Comer, James; And Others
TITLE Our National Dilemma.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 40p.; In: Making Schools Work for Underachieving Minority Students: Next Steps for Research, Policy, and Practice. Proceedings of the Conference, see UD 026 176.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Black History; *Black Students; Early Experience; *Educational Improvement; Educationally Disadvantaged; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; *Family School Relationship; Hispanic Americans; Lower Class Students; *Minority Group Children; Minority Group Teachers; Parent Participation; Parent Student Relationship; Program Development; Racial Bias; School Business Relationship; *School Community Relationship; Social Attitudes; Teacher Education; *Underachievement; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS *Collaboratives; Empowerment

ABSTRACT

The three conference papers presented in this document are grouped under the general heading, "Our National Dilemma," and deal with issues involved in providing disadvantaged students with a quality education. The first paper, "Building Quality Relationships" (James Comer), discusses the need to improve the quality of relationships between home and school, and between adults and children. Preschool experiences are important sources of these relationships. The black experience in America created conditions that disconnected black families from the mainstream of society, and denied many black children the kinds of preschool experiences that would allow them to succeed in school. The second paper, entitled "The Educationally Disadvantaged Are Still among Us" (Henry Levin), discusses the new reforms and the disadvantaged and the social consequences of inaction. A discussion on what needs to be done is provided, and a new approach--the establishment of Accelerated Schools for the Disadvantaged--is suggested. The third paper, "Understanding the Dimensions of Our Problem" (Samuel Betances), presents a personal account of the experiences of a black Puerto Rican in America. Educators who teach minorities from dominant/host society enclaves should focus on empowering them with job skills, and the skills to reject rejection. Businesses should sponsor evening tutoring centers for children whose parents are unable to help them at home. (BJV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED294949

OUR NATIONAL DILEMMA

James Comer
Yale University

Henry Levine
Stanford University

Samuel Betances
Northeastern Illinois University

UD 026 177

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Dian Siegel
Center for the Study of Evaluation
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

OUR NATIONAL DILEMMA

Building Quality Relationships

James Comer
Yale University

It is a very great pleasure for me to be here. I am delighted that you are having this discussion on Making Schools Work for Underachieving Minorities and I am delighted that you asked me to participate. There is probably no more critical an issue facing our country from the standpoint of individual students, their families, their community and society, and yet, as we all know, we are not giving the issue the kind of attention that it deserves.

I would like to share my understanding of the problem this morning in several ways. First, I will say just a little bit about my own background, because it raises some of the questions that got me interested in the problems of education in the first place, and mention some of the insights I have gained from this personal background. Then I will talk about the nature of the problem as I understand it, and the impact of science and technology on community, family, development, and the development of children over the past 70 years. I will stress its impact on education in particular. I will talk about why minorities have been most adversely affected by the technological and social changes that have been taking place. Then, I will briefly talk about our intervention and research project in New Haven, Connecticut, not as a model, but as the source of my recent insights concerning the education of minority students.

Just a little bit about my own background. I am from a low-income family, and a disproportionate number of the underachieving young people that we are concerned about today are from low-income families, although too many middle income minority students are also underachieving, for reasons I will discuss. Both of my parents were from the rural South: my mother from rural Mississippi, my father from rural Alabama. My mother worked as a domestic in the North and had absolutely no education. My father worked in a steel mill and had only a sixth grade education. Nevertheless, together the two of them sent their five children to college where we earned thirteen college degrees among us.

As I describe in a book about my family that will be coming out very soon, my three best friends that I went to elementary school with, who were from the same kind of background as I was, who were just as able on the playground, in the church and a variety of other places, did not do well in school, and had a downhill course in life. One died early of alcoholism, one spent a good part of his life in jail, the other has been in and out of mental institutions all of his life. The only difference between my friends' and our own family's experience was that my parents, through their connections with the church and other affiliations, developed attitudes, values and interactive skills that allowed them to interact with our schools and school people in a way that allowed them to support us, and taught us interactive skills and ways of managing ourselves in schools that allowed us to succeed. I was interested in the fact that those former classmates did not succeed although they had the ability, and that interest led me to my career in this field. The question I have always had is, "Why can't the schools provide children with what they do not receive at home and make it possible for them to achieve at the level of their ability?" That was in the back of my mind when I began my work in schools.

Let us turn now to the impact of science and technology on our society and the changes over the years that I feel have led to the academic underachievement in this country until the 1950's when education became the ticket of admission to living-wage jobs. You needed that job to be able to provide for yourself, your family, and carry out all your adult responsibilities. Prior to that point, you could drop out of school and still meet all your responsibilities. After the 1950's, a disproportionate number of people who left school were on a downhill course.

Now, if this is true, why can't we just show young people the light and convince them to stay in school? Unfortunately, it takes more than understanding that there are undesirable outcomes of not achieving well in school to keep students from failing. It really requires adequate support for the student's development, from infancy onward, and it requires adequate schools--schools functioning in such a way that they can promote the success of young people. That is the problem.

In the society of yesterday, it was not a great problem because we were a nation of small towns and rural areas. Even our cities were basically collections of small towns. Work and play were local

and often communal. There was a low level of mobility and communications were limited. People had social interactions in their churches, clubs and a variety of other activities within their localities. There was an on-going interaction among authority figures to develop a great deal of trust in one another. They at least knew what to expect from one another. There was a sense of place. Even though your place might not be a desirable place in the society, you had a sense of place. Life was very predictable. There was a sense of community as a result of past conditions. The school was a natural part of the community and there was an automatic transfer of authority from home to school as a result of the interactions that authority figures had on a regular basis.

Those authority figures were really the source of all truth for young people. Everything they knew about the world came to them from those important authority figures, who could censure the truth and censure you for not behaving in certain ways. They spoke with a common tongue about what was right, wrong, good or bad, and if you asked one what was right, wrong, good or bad, you might as well have asked them all, because they were all saying the same thing.

One example of this was when I would go the A & P store with my parents every Friday, and there was never a time that I did not bump in to someone from my school--the custodian, a teacher, the principal, the clerk. Someone from the school was there, and there was always an exchange of information between them and my parents about how I was doing in school, and what was expected, and what would happen if I did not do well. I always knew that there was only so much acting up that was possible in school, given the fact that I was going to meet them next Friday in the grocery store.

One day, when I was eleven years old and about to get into trouble, someone next door to where I was about to get into trouble was a "sister" from our church, and before I even got home, my father knew what I was up to. Now, I was fortunate. I had one of those progressive fathers who didn't spank me, but who pointed out to me that if I wanted to be respected by the people in my church and my neighborhood, there were certain things that I could do and certain things that I could not do. Since I wanted to be respected, I did not do those things, at least not where anybody could see me. My point is that the home, the school, the neighborhood, everybody involved was aiding my social development and that of all the children in my community.

After World War II, science and technology were applied to every aspect of life. As a result, we became a nation of metropolitan areas with high mobility. You could, and often did work long distances from where you lived, and you would not interact on a regular basis with parents, teachers, administrators, all of the traditional authority figures in society. In addition, there was massive visual communication as a result of television.

Society became more complex as a result of these conditions, and there was less trust because people did not get to know each other on a regular basis. There was less of a sense of place, less of a sense of community. There was increasing distrust and alienation developing as a result of overall social conditions. Youngsters received more information than ever before in the history of the world from television. Television brought attitudes, values and ways from around the world right to the children without any censorship or explanation by their parents or community. Very often those attitudes, values and ways were in conflict with what parents were trying to teach their children.

I became personally aware of this situation when my daughter was about four years of age. My wife and I were both working, and we had a housekeeper who liked to watch the "soaps." I was packing to go on a trip when my daughter came to me and very solemnly shook her finger at me and said, "Now don't you have an affair!" She was four. I was sixteen before I knew what an "affair" was.

Given these conditions I have briefly outlined, the complexity of the world, the amount and diversity of information that young people receive, it is understandable that they need the highest level of development than ever before needed to gain the necessary competence to function well as adults. They need more sustained and skilled adult help for development than has ever before been required. They need institutions that support their development over a longer period of time than ever before. When in fact, they have less support today than in the past. There are many more families in which both parents are working than in previous years. There is more divorce today. There is more social stress. There are more parents who, because of past social conditions, are without the kinds of skills that would allow them to help their children function well.

Schools have not responded adequately to the challenge. Schools remain hierarchical and authoritarian, inadequately flexible. They can not respond to the problems right in front of them. The training of teachers and administrators is such that many really do not understand children and do not understand the behaviors that they are confronted with.

The transfer of authority from home to school is no longer automatic. It is conditional, it depends on the quality of relationships between home and school. A teacher pointed this out to me recently when she said that a six-year-old in her class, after she explained the expectations of the school, raised his hand and said, "Teacher, my momma said I don't hafta do anything you say." Very different from in the past when there was an automatic transfer of authority from home to school.

Thus, the problem is that students need the highest level of development to achieve well in school and to achieve well in life, and yet we increasingly have families that are unable to support such development and schools that have not been responsive. In fact, there has been very little understanding of the relationship between good personal development and academic learning. We still think of academic learning in a very mechanical fashion. It is something that is merely put in (the child), the learning machine (brain) acts on it, and the child is then "educated." We often view behavior solely as a willful act, and thus troublesome behavior, as a willful bad act, deserves to be punished. In light of these misconceptions, I would like to review very quickly the whole issue of human development, how it relates to academic learning, and why it is the problem that I think is central and must be addressed if we are to help underachieving minority of children.

Our society, like all societies, has certain tasks that we ask everybody to be able to accomplish by the time they are adults. We ask people to get specific training so that they can hold the kinds of jobs that are available today so that they can live successfully in families and neighborhoods, and so that they can participate as responsible citizens of society. But children are not born capable of carrying out any of these things. They are born totally dependent, with only the biological potentials that must be developed over time. They are born with aggressive energy that can be destructive to themselves and everybody around them unless it is very carefully channeled into the energy of life survival.

They are born with the capacity for relationships and it is that capacity for relationships that we must act on to make it possible for children to develop and learn. The caretaker--parents, in particular, teachers and others must interact with and provide for the basic needs of the child in a way that the child establishes an attachment, an emotional attachment and bonding that allows the parents then to lead the child across developmental pathways that lead to mature development. There are many pathways, but several are critical, crucial for academic learning. They are: 1) social-interactive, 2) psycho-emotional, 3) moral, 4) speech and language, and 5) intellectual, cognitive or academic. I include academic at the end of that list because the academic is really a function of overall good development. When children are developing well, they have the highest potential for learning in school.

Let me give just a couple of examples of what I mean by adult-child interactions that help children grow. A two-year-old who wants to play with the ball another child is playing with does not know that he or she cannot just take that ball. They will do it, and if the other child resists, they will often simply hit him in the mouth and take the ball anyway. Now, the parent who is present has to say, "Michael, you cannot take Johnny's ball. You'll have to go do something else `till Johnny is through, or maybe you can work it out and you can play together." The parent spells out the options and because of the close parent-child relationship, the child wants to please the parent and acts appropriately. In the process, the child begins to develop along all those developmental pathways--the social rules of the game, controlling the impulse to hit, and handling any feelings about that situation. What is right and what is wrong is learned in that situation. Speech and language is involved and thinking, learning, cognitive development is involved.

Parents who are functioning well and understand the importance of reading to their children and can read will often read to their children at the end of the day, a good time, an emotionally good time when the child has the parent to himself or herself in the big, busy world. Reading, and that moment, becomes emotionally charged and a positive emotional experience. Many children's stories are designed to deal with fears and anxieties that children have, and so they want to hear them again and again. After a few times hearing the story, the child has associated the page, the picture with the words he hears and begins to "read" from memory and his

parents get all excited. "Look Mom, Johnny can read!" And when grandma calls on weekends, "Guess what Grandma? Johnny can read!" Johnny hears all of these important, powerful adults excited about the fact that he can read, so he wants to read more and more. He wants to master everything in his or her environment to please those powerful adults until it becomes important to please himself on his own. And that is the beginning of the motivation for learning to read and to becoming an achiever.

In addition, that child probably notices that his parent starts reading at the top of a page and reads from top down, reads from left to right, and explains the story in certain ways. All of those are pre-reading skills, and that child goes to school already reading or at least prepared to learn to read. This impresses his teacher. Teachers like bright kids who seem curious and who seem to have skills, and seem to be able to handle themselves and behave well. These characteristics make it easier for teachers to relate well to such a child, and for the child to make an attachment to them. A similar attachment or bonding that took place with parents takes place with school staff, and that allows the school staff to motivate and support the child for development in school. It allows the child to imitate, internalize, and identify with the attitudes, values, the ways of school people, and things that are going on in school.

The child who is able to have such experiences develops a sense of competence and confidence, wins the approval of the people around him or her, develops personal esteem and is motivated to continue to grow and develop and learn. The opposite occurs for children who have not had preschool experiences that prepare them to go to school and present themselves in a similar kind of way. Those children very often have experiences in groups and families that lead to a downhill course.

Now, the question is: Who are these families? The answer is: A disproportionate number of them are Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. It is because the experiences of those groups have been very different from other groups. I will discuss these experiences very briefly, not to accuse or to excuse, or to blame, or to promote guilt, but to think in terms of understanding what has happened and how we can develop effective interventions. I will talk only about the Black experience because that is the one I know most about, but there are similarities among all three groups.

I will start with the Black experience in West Africa. Most Black Americans are from West Africa, where there was a tightknit political, economical and social system that was integrated into the kinship system of those areas. Out of the relationships and the social organizations, families developed a sense of direction and values, were motivated to perform in certain ways and were able to rely on certain qualities of relationships that were prescribed and expected. These were largely communal societies, with relationships, sharing and a sense of belonging being very important.

Slavery resulted in the dislocation of people, the disruption of kinship systems and all of the guiding, supporting institutions, discontinuity of culture and loss of social cohesion. This is very different from the American immigrant's experience, and it is important to talk about the immigrant experience briefly because consciously and unconsciously, we use that as a model of the way all groups in our society adjusted and the way all families functioned.

Immigrants came to America with their religion largely intact. They came with their language intact. Many came in groups from the same hometown, and relocated to the same town operating as homogeneous ethnic enclaves until they were able to make it into the mainstream of the society. Educational and social opportunities were available almost instantly, and all of these conditions promoted family stability. Those families were able to undergo a kind of three-generational upward movement and development.

The prevailing economic conditions allowed people to work, provide for their families, and provide family stability. Conditions allowed those parents then to help their children grow and to learn in school. The opportunities in the mainstream of society almost immediately made it possible for them to want to gain an education and want to gain skills and contacts in order to make it into the mainstream of the society. The men could vote almost immediately. They had political, economic and social power. The educational-social opportunity made it possible for tremendous progress within the three generations. The first generation (the immigrants who arrived before 1900) could be uneducated and unskilled, but adequately provide for their families, which created the stability that allowed you to achieve moderate education and skill during the next generation, 1900 to 1945. Stability in the job market, with moderate education during that period allowed those families to provide their children with experiences that made it possible for them to function

well during that next (third) period, between 1945 and 1980, when you needed a high level of education and skill to be successful in the job market. During this post-industrial era, when even with a high level of education and skill many adults are in some difficulty in the job market, finding a job became highly competitive.

The Black experience in America made this type of three-generational movement impossible. Slavery was a system of forced dependency. Food, clothing, shelter and all of the basic needs were provided by an outside force, the master. There was no future. No matter how hard you worked, the achievement was for the master, not for your family, not for your group. There was no sense of control. Powerlessness, profound powerlessness is a major social-psychological strike. Even one's sexual experience and major social relationships could be determined and supervised by the master. These profound conditions affected the functioning of the group and the family.

There were behavioral consequences as well, such as acting up and acting out behavior on the part of many, violence and aggression often against other slaves. There was passive-aggressive behavior, doing as little as you can, working as slowly as you can without being punished, leaving a plow out in the field to rust. There was apathy, withdrawal and depression within and among the slaves. All of these situations created troublesome attitudes, and in some families, the attitudes and behaviours were transmitted from generation to generation.

After the Civil War, conditions were not much better. Through subterfuge and terror, Blacks were denied the vote, and as a result of that, political, economical and social power was not possible. The Black family and community could not develop mainstream knowledge, skills or contacts. Only limited education was available. Even as recent as the 1940's, four to eight times as much money was spent on the education of a White child as on the education of a Black child in the eight states that had 80 percent of the Black population. This was a significant problem because the period of 1900 to the 1940's was when most of America was preparing for the last stage of the industrial revolution, a time when you needed a high level of education and skill to be successful.

The same problem existed in higher education. As late as the mid 1960's, two prestigious White women's colleges had an

endowment that was about one-half the endowment of Harvard. And that one-half endowment of Harvard was more than that of all the 100-plus Black colleges put together. Thus, there was massive undereducation of the Black community well into the 1960's.

In spite of these negative social, economic and political conditions, the church culture allowed many Black families to function relatively well and provided them with organization, a sense of direction, values, and motivation and allowed them to achieve adult tasks regardless of their low income.

The Black church culture also led to the creation of an educated nucleus of Blacks which eventually led to the Civil Rights Movement. But by that time we were already into the 1960's, the middle of the third stage of the industrial era, and much of the Black community had by then been closed out of opportunities to obtain living-wage jobs. One needed mainstream knowledge, skills and contacts to overcome the racial discrimination and problems that existed.

Blacks had been excluded from high quality educational institutions and from the mainstream of economic and political contacts. Yet, many Black families were still functioning well through the 1950's, at which point 80 percent of all Black families were two-parent families, and Black communities were largely safe places. Since the 1950's we have begun to see many families that once functioned well begin to function less well.

What we see now are Black families going in opposite directions, most of those who were able to organize and be successful prior to the 1950's functioning better than ever before, those who were not able to do so having more difficulty than ever before. In addition, because of identity problems, because of racial barriers and social network pressures, many middle income Black children are not functioning as well as they should, not achieving at a high enough level. In too many cases, achievement has been associated with being White, and non-achievement has been associated with being loyal to one's Black identity.

These were some of the most serious problems that we were confronted with when we started our intervention/research program in New Haven. To briefly describe it, in 1968, our Child Study Center team, which I directed with a social worker and special education teacher, began working with two schools which were 99 percent

Black and almost all the children were poor. They were 32nd and 33rd out of 33 elementary schools in reading, language arts and mathematics achievement, nineteen and eighteen months behind in those areas by the fourth grade. They had the worst attendance in the city, they had the worst behaviour in the city. By 1984, the children in these two schools were tied for third and tied for fourth respectively in the city in language arts and mathematics achievement, a year above grade level in one school, seven months above in the other, with no change in the socioeconomic makeup. Six of the previous seven years they were first or second in attendance, and we have not had a serious behaviour problem in over a decade.

In our method of intervention, we thought about the conditions that had been a part of the Black community, and how we had to acknowledge what had changed in the society. Then we had to develop an intervention that dealt with dependency, that dealt with the feeling that there was no future and no sense of control. We also focused on the underdevelopment of the children who came from families that were under severe pressure. We realized that we had to empower all who were involved in the school, which is what I meant by school power, as described by my book with that title. We had to involve students in actively learning, not passive learning, in order to allow for self actualization. We had to create something that would allow them to see that they had a future, and that they were in school to prepare for a positive future.

We therefore developed a major focus on the organizational management of the school that would give us flexibility to respond to the problems as we found them, and to develop a sense of trust to cope with the major problem of alienation, anger, distrust, hopelessness and despair. We developed a governance and management group that was representative of all the adults in the school. They worked together on the social program of the school to create a good climate of relationships that would allow teaching and learning to take place, and on the academic program of the school.

We developed a way to utilize mental health knowledge and skills and positive ways of relating to and supporting the development of the children without saying to people, "You don't know how to work with children." The new approach was carried out by a "mental health team" that focused not only on treating individual children, but also on helping the system function and create. The fundamental idea was to give teachers and other school

staff members the kinds of skills that would allow them to understand children and to support their development. These ways of working decreased the behavior problems, allowed the teachers to feel better about themselves, caused them to have more energy, more time to focus on the teaching and learning tasks.

We also realized that we had to create a sense of future and a sense of opportunity, and so we created a program we called the Social Skills Curriculum for Inner City Children. We asked the parents in what areas they felt the children would need skills to be successful as adults, focusing towards adulthood even in elementary school. We came up with four areas: politics and government, business and economics, health and nutrition, and spiritual-leisure time activities. We then developed units that integrated teaching of basic skills, arts, and social skills. Our assumption was that many of the children were from families that were disconnected from the mainstream of society and that many of the children had not received the kinds of experiences that would allow them to impress their teachers and make the ties that were necessary to be motivated for tomorrow.

We developed this approach first at the elementary school level and got dramatic improvement in the achievement. We are now also doing it at the middle school level and in the high school. In the high school we are focusing very much on tying the young people into the real world. We are also bringing the real world--adults in many occupations and representing many mainstream agencies--into the school. The program seeks to help the real world understand what the students will need, and to help the students develop the skills and ties that have been generally denied the Black community. With knowledge of the real world, children can then be motivated to develop the skills that are necessary to be successful throughout their lives.

My final comment, about research and evaluation, is really a challenge to all of you. I think that the field of education had been very much influenced by psychology, with the focus on the individual. We have also been very much influenced by the results of experimental research. This type of research has dominated the field so much that when we were trying to get support from the National Institute of Mental Health, they wanted to know about our independent variables, our dependent variables, and what was it specifically that we did that made the difference. I could not convey

to them that it was a structure operating on a daily basis in the school that influenced the climate of relationships that made it possible for people to plan and that you could not put your finger on exactly what made the difference.

To understand our program, we really need an ecological prospective, because what we really did was to change the ecology of the school. We changed the quality of the relationships, the nature of the relationships, the way people interacted with each other.

So the challenge is to find a way to evaluate our kind of approach and to understand what goes on in systems that allows them to change and allows the children to develop in a way in which they can achieve academically and develop the skills and the motivation to become responsible citizens, responsible family members, responsible and competent childrearers. Unless we do that we really have not achieved the mission of the school, because the mission of the school is not simply to teach basic academic skills, it is not simply to provide employers with future competent workers, but it is to prepare children to be responsible citizens of a democratic society.

OUR NATIONAL DILEMMA

The Educationally Disadvantaged Are Still Among Us

Henry Levin
Stanford University

Most of the recent reports on reforming American education ignore the problem of the educationally disadvantaged. Pupils defined as educationally disadvantaged lack the home and community resources to fully benefit from recent educational reforms as well as from conventional schooling practices. Because of poverty, cultural differences, or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement and experience high secondary school drop-out rates. Such students are especially concentrated among minority groups, immigrants, non-English-speaking families and economically disadvantaged populations.

The educationally disadvantaged begin their schooling with lower standardized achievement than their non-disadvantaged peers. Typically, they rank at about the 15th percentile in achievement performance throughout their schooling careers. Unfortunately, that standard of performance means that such students fall farther and farther behind in achievement and are about three years behind grade level by the end of secondary school. As a consequence of both their poor achievement and other factors, educationally disadvantaged students have exceedingly high dropout rates, approaching 50 percent according to recent data.

The War on Poverty, launched some two decades ago, made the educationally disadvantaged a central target of educational policy. In stark contrast, recent policy statements such as that of the National Commission on Educational Excellence's Nation at Risk or the current report by U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett, First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America virtually neglect the disadvantaged as an educational priority.

Unfortunately, few congratulations are in order. The vanishing of the disadvantaged from policy reports and the media is a reflection of political expediency or wishful thinking rather than an educational triumph. The battle to overcome educational disadvantage did not end in victory, but in neglect and disarray. At

present the educationally disadvantaged are estimated to constitute about 30 percent of elementary and secondary enrollments, a far higher proportion than in the sixties. And, their numbers are increasing more rapidly than the non-disadvantaged. In states such as California and Texas they will account for the majority of enrollments during the next decade. Moreover, gains in educational achievement for the disadvantaged have been so marginal, that their educational situation is as serious today as it was in the sixties.

Why are the disadvantaged increasing so rapidly? First, the groups that constitute such populations are relatively young and have far higher birthrates than non-disadvantaged populations. Second, the U.S. is experiencing a wave of documented immigration that is unprecedented since the turn of the century, and added to this are huge numbers of undocumented immigrants. Most of today's immigrants to the U.S. derive from rural and impoverished circumstances where little schooling was provided. Third, the proportion of children in poverty families--many of them female-headed--is higher today than it was a decade ago. High birth rates of existing disadvantaged groups, a rising number of children from poverty families, and immigration are all fueling the rapid upsurge in disadvantaged students. This phenomenon has overwhelmed the schools of the largest cities in America where a majority of their enrollments are disadvantaged.

Social Consequences of Inaction

In the absence of substantial educational interventions, the rapidly increasing population of educationally disadvantaged students will ultimately emerge as a large and growing population of disadvantaged adults. The potential consequences of ignoring the needs of these students will afflict not only the disadvantaged, but the larger society as well. These consequences include: (1) the emergence of a dual society with a large and poorly educated underclass, (2) massive disruption in higher education, (3) reduced economic competitiveness of the nation as well as states and industries most heavily impacted by these populations, and (4) higher costs for public services that are a response to poverty.

As the disadvantaged population increases without appropriate educational interventions to improve substantially its situation, this group is likely to form the underclass of a dual society. Composed of racial and ethnic minorities and persons from economically

disadvantaged origins, its members will face high unemployment rates, low earnings, and menial occupations. At the same time the political power of the disadvantaged will increase as its numbers and potential votes rise. The specter of a dual society suggests great political conflict and potential social upheaval. Economic and educational inequality in conjunction with equal political rights are the ingredients for future polarization and intense political, social, and economic conflict and instability.

The implications for higher education are also severe. Larger and larger numbers of educationally disadvantaged will mean that public institutions of higher education will have to become more restrictive in their admissions criteria or more devoted to remedial academic work. Either direction is fraught with problems. Substantial remedial activities will require additional university resources, and student programs will take longer to complete their degrees. All of this means that costs to universities and students will spiral. The increase in remedial functions will alter the character of public higher education with a tendency to water down the overall curriculum and reduce standards as pressures increase to approve the application of such courses to degree programs.

Alternatively, the universities may seek to restrict admissions through greater reliance on standardized test scores and more academic course requirements so that fewer persons from disadvantaged populations can participate in higher education. Even now a disproportionately small share of minority and educationally disadvantaged students are eligible to participate in public higher education because of their high rates of dropping out and their poor academic records in secondary school. But these disproportions will be exacerbated by creating an elite system for admissions, a result that flies in the face of the democratic mission conferred upon public systems of higher education supported by tax revenues collected from the entire population. At the same time that higher education would become more exclusive, those who were increasingly excluded would be expanding their political power at both the state and federal levels. Clearly, such a policy will lead to political and social turmoil, both on and off the campuses.

A further consequence of the present treatment of the educationally disadvantaged will be a serious deterioration in the quality of the labor force. As long as the disadvantaged were just a small minority of the population, they could be absorbed into

seasonal and low-skill jobs or relegated to unemployment without direct consequences for the overall economy. But, as their numbers grow and they continue to experience low achievement and high dropout rates, a larger and larger portion of the available labor force will be unprepared for available jobs. Here we refer not only to managerial, professional, and technical jobs, but to the huge and burgeoning numbers of lower-level service jobs that are characterizing the economy. Clerical workers, cashiers, and salespeople need basic skills in oral and written communications, computations, and reasoning, skills that are not guaranteed to the educationally disadvantaged. A U.S. government study in 1976 found that while 13 percent of all 17 year olds were classified as functionally illiterate, the percentages of illiterates among Hispanics and Blacks were 56 and 44 percent respectively.

The U.S. is already facing great difficulties in maintaining a competitive economic stance relative to other industrialized and industrializing nations. As the disadvantaged become an increasing and even a dominant share of the labor force in some states and regions, their inadequate educational preparation will undermine the competitive position of the industries and states in which they work and our national economic status. Employers will suffer lagging productivity, higher training costs, and competitive disadvantages that will result in lost sales and profits. State and federal government will suffer a declining tax base and loss of tax revenues, thus curtailing funds for improving education and other services.

Finally, the economic losses will come at a time of rising demands for public services. More and more citizens will rely upon public assistance to meet their needs, and increasing numbers of undereducated teens and adults will rely upon illegal activities to fill idle time and obtain the income that is not obtainable through legal ones. The inability to find regular employment that is remunerative enough to overcome poverty will require greater public interventions to support the rising poverty population and to counter drugs, prostitution, theft, and other activities associated with poverty. This development will not only make the U.S. a less desirable place to live, but it will also increase the costs of police services and criminal justice as well as public assistance. Pressures will be placed on the middle class to pay higher taxes at the same time that incomes are threatened by a flagging economy, creating an additional source of political conflict as besieged taxpayers resist tax increases.

The New Reforms and the Disadvantaged

Although the rhetoric of the recent state reforms stresses the improvement of the education of all children, including the disadvantaged, this emphasis is not supported by the substance of the reforms. The educationally disadvantaged are systematically neglected. The reforms stress raising standards at the secondary level, without providing additional resources or new strategies to assist the disadvantaged in meeting these higher standards. Any strategy for improving the educational plight of the disadvantaged must begin at the elementary level and must be dedicated to preparing children for doing high quality work in secondary school. Simply raising standards at the secondary level without making it possible for the disadvantaged to meet the new standards, is more likely to increase their dropping out.

Two of the most typical recent state reforms are the setting of competency standards for a diploma and raising course requirements for graduation. Paradoxically, both of these may contribute to increasing dropouts of disadvantaged students who already have difficulty in meeting the old standards. Disadvantaged students enter secondary school with achievement levels that are two years or more below those of their non-disadvantaged counterparts. Even present standards are difficult to meet with this handicap. Unless this gap can be closed prior to entering secondary school, the higher standards will serve to further discourage the disadvantaged rather than improve their performance.

In this respect, the current wave of reforms may be meritorious for many non-disadvantaged students, while actually serving as obstacles for improving the education of the disadvantaged. Reforms for the disadvantaged must address their needs directly, rather than assuming that a rise in general standards will automatically solve the needs of all students.

What Needs to Be Done

Twenty years of experience has shown that there does exist instructional interventions that promise at least modest improvement in the achievement of the disadvantaged. For example, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, mastery learning, computer-

assisted instruction, pre-school programs, and new curricula have all shown some success in this regard. The major challenge is that these successes have been exceedingly modest relative to the achievement gap that exists. While each of these might systematically close some of the achievement gap, for example, raising achievement from the 15th to the 20th percentile, gains of this magnitude do not provide a substantial improvement in the educational or occupational fortunes of the disadvantaged.

Progress towards further improving the education of the disadvantaged is limited by the very way in which we think about and address the problem. We know that disadvantaged children begin school with a learning gap in those areas valued by schools and mainstream economic and social institutions. But, remedial interventions are not adequate unless they ultimately contribute to a substantial narrowing or closing of that gap by bringing the disadvantaged up to the same range of academic performance as their non-disadvantaged peers.

The existing model of intervention assumes that disadvantaged students will not be able to maintain a normal instructional pace, that the mere provision of remedial services will close the learning gap, and that no time-table is required. Thus, the remedial model consists essentially of placing such youngsters in a less demanding instructional setting without a time limit. Although this may appear rational and even compassionate, we must consider its consequences.

First, this process reduces learning expectations on the part of both the child and the educators who are assigned to teach them functions and stigmatizes both groups with a level of inferiority. Such a stigma contributes to weak social support for the activity, low social status for the participants, and negative self-images for the persons engaged in remediation. The combination of low social status and low expectations is tantamount to treating such students and their educators as educational discards who are marginal to the agenda of mainstream education. These are the unhealthiest of all possible conditions under which to expect significant educational progress. <u>In contrast, an effective approach focus on creating learning activities which are characterized by high expectations and status for the participants.</u>

Second, the usual treatment of the educationally disadvantaged is not designed to bring students up to grade level. There exists no

time-tables for doing so, and there are rarely any incentives or even provisions for students to move from remedial instruction back to the mainstream. In fact, since students in compensatory or remedial situations are expected to progress at a slower than "normal" pace, a self-fulfilling prophecy is realized as they fall farther and farther behind their non-disadvantaged counterparts. The result is that once a disadvantaged student is relegated to remedial or compensatory interventions, that student will be expected to learn at a slower rate, and the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students will grow. While the gap may be measured in months of achievement in first grade, it will have grown to years of difference by secondary school. A successful program must set a deadline for closing the achievement gap so that ultimately educationally disadvantaged children will be able to benefit from mainstream instruction.

Third, by deliberately slowing the pace of instruction to a crawl, a heavy emphasis is placed on endless repetition of material through drill-and-practice. The result is that the school experience to the disadvantaged lacks intrinsic vitality, and the slow rate of progress just reinforces low expectations. Interesting applications and assignments are omitted in favor of drudgery, on the premise that these fundamentals must be learned before anything more challenging can proceed. Both language skills and mathematics are virtually substance-less, emphasizing mechanics over content. Such a joyless experience further negates the child's educational experience and diminishes the possibility that the child will view the school as a positive environment in which progress can be made. An effective curriculum for the disadvantaged child must not only be faster paced, but must actively engage the interests of such children so that they will be motivated to learn.

In addition to these shortcomings, most compensatory educational programs do not involve parents sufficiently or draw adequately upon available community resources. Furthermore, the professional staff at the school level are often omitted from participating in the important educational decisions that they must implement. Such an omission means that teachers are expected to dedicate themselves to the implementation of programs which do not necessarily reflect their professional judgments, a condition which is not likely to spur great enthusiasm. The implementation of successful educational programs to address the needs of the educationally disadvantaged will require the involvement of parents

and the extensive participation of teachers in formulating the interventions that will be provided. Given the severity of these impediments to the effective schooling of the educationally disadvantaged, it is little wonder that even the most successful programs have produced modest results. These outcomes persist despite the good intentions and efforts of the many educators who work with the disadvantaged. It is the basic approach and its underlying assumptions that are at fault.

A New Approach

What we have learned from the experience of the last twenty years is that an effective approach to educating the disadvantaged must be characterized by high expectations, deadlines by which such children will be performing at grade level, stimulating instructional programs, planning by the educational staff who will offer the program, and the use of all available resources including the parents of the students. At its heart, the educational intervention must be viewed as transitional. That is, the intervention will be designed to close the achievement gap so that such students can benefit from regular instruction after some period of intervention.

In order to meet these goals, I have been working with a group of colleagues at Stanford University's School of Education to design a program of Accelerated Schools for the Disadvantaged. The Accelerated School is a transitional elementary school that is designed to bring disadvantaged students up to grade level by the completion of the sixth grade. The goal of the school is to enable disadvantaged students to take advantage of mainstream secondary school instruction by effectively closing the achievement gap in elementary school. The approach is also designed to be a dropout prevention program by eliminating the most important single cause of dropping out, serious achievement deficits.

The school is based upon an accelerated curriculum that is designed to bring all children up to grade level. The entire organization of the school will focus on this goal rather than limiting interventions for the disadvantaged to "pull out" sessions in a school where the dominant agenda addresses other goals. This approach requires an assessment system that evaluates the performance of each child at school entry and sets a trajectory for meeting the overall school goal for that child. Periodic evaluations on wide-spectrum, standardized achievement tests as well as tailored

assessments created by school staff for each strand of the curriculum will enable the school to see if the child is on the anticipated trajectory.

Major curriculum aspects include a heavily language-based approach, even in mathematics. Language use will be emphasized across the curriculum, with an early introduction to writing and reading for meaning. An emphasis will also be placed upon applications of new tools to everyday problems and events in order to stress the usefulness of what is being taught and learned.

Parents will be deeply involved in two ways. First, they will be asked to sign along with school representatives a written agreement which clarifies the obligations of parents, school staff, and students. The agreement will be explained to parents and translated, if necessary. Second, the parents will be given opportunities to interact with the school program and to be given training for providing active assistance to their children. Parents will be asked to set high educational expectations for their children and to support their success as well as to encourage reading.

Other features include the implementation of an extended-day program in which rest periods, physical activities, the arts, and a time period for independent assignments or homework will be provided. During this period, college students and senior citizen volunteers will work with individual students to provide learning assistance. Since many of the children are "latch-key" children, the extension of the school day is likely to be attractive to parents. Instructional strategies will also include peer tutoring and cooperative learning. Both have been shown to be especially effective with disadvantaged students.

These broad features of the accelerated school are designed to make it a total institution for the disadvantaged, rather than just grafting on compensatory or remedial classes to elementary schools with a conventional agenda. However, the actual choice of curriculum and instructional strategies will be decided by the instructional staff of the school. That is, the decision-making approach is a school-based one in which those who will be providing the instruction will make the decisions. Each school will have a site team composed of instructional staff and a representative of the central office of the district. The Stanford group will assist in the planning process by providing information, technical assistance, and

help in initiating a school-based governance model. But, each school will set out a program that is consonant with the strengths of the district and the local staff. In this way, the reform will be a "bottom-up" approach in which the professionals who are providing the instruction will make the decisions which they will implement and evaluate.

During the 1986-87 school year, the Stanford group is developing a full information clearing-house on the Accelerated School, training capabilities for staff, and an assessment model. At the same time we are working with site teams at schools in San Francisco and Redwood City, California to plan programs for Accelerated Schools that will open in the Autumn of 1987. We believe that this approach has a high probability of success because of its emphasis on the instrumental goal of bringing students up to grade level by the completion of sixth grade; its stress on acceleration of learning and high expectations; its reliance on a professional model of school governance which is attractive to educators; its capacity to benefit from instructional strategies that have shown good results for the disadvantaged within the limits of existing models of compensatory education; and its ability to draw upon all of the resources available to the community including parents and senior citizens.

In large measure we believe that the approach can be implemented within existing resource constraints including federal and state categorical grants. The only aspect that will have obvious, additional cost implications is the extension of the school day. Finally, this approach does not require new legislation at either the state or federal level, but can be implemented with local initiatives by educators and parents.

By solving much of the problem of the educationally disadvantaged at the elementary level, we hope to reduce the risk of dropping out and to save much of the cost of secondary school dropout programs. We believe that improved levels of school achievement and self-concept will also go far to reduce problems of violence, drugs, and teen pregnancies of secondary school students. Finally, it must be stressed emphatically that unless we take a bold stand to intervene now in behalf of the disadvantaged, we will soon be reaping the distasteful harvest of our neglect.

Footnotes

A fuller review of the issues that are covered here and the evidence supporting them is found in Henry M. Levin, Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Student: An Emerging Crisis (Washington, D.C.: The National Education Association, 1986). Critical and comprehensive views of what we have learned from 20 years of research on the education of the disadvantaged are found in a group of papers prepared for the Conference on Effects of Alternative Designs in Compensatory Education, sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education (June 17-18, 1986). See particularly: Penelope Peterson, "Selecting Student and Services for Compensatory Education: Lessons from Aptitude-Treatment Interaction Research;" Thomas A. Romberg, "Mathematics for Compensatory School Programs;" and Jere Brophy, "Research Linking Teacher Behavior to Student Achievement: Potential Implications for Instruction of Chapter I Students."

OUR NATIONAL DILEMMA

Understanding the Dimensions of our Problem

Samuel Betances
Northeastern Illinois University

I'm very pleased to be here, and there is absolutely no reason why people who have been involved in research should know who I am. So I have to introduce myself from another vantage point because my name won't do it. Neither will my accent. My name is Samuel, it's like "damn well", it's an Hispanic version of Samuel. I was born in Harlem in New York City, but I was raised in "Puerrto Rrrrico", where I learned to roll my Rs. My last name is Betances. As long as we're going to be educated about diversity and minorities, we might as well learn to pronounce these names. The first name is "Sam-well," try that. (Audience) "Sam-well."

All right. The last name is "Bay-tan-says". Put it together. (Audience) "Sam-well Bay-tan-says".

See how easy it is; you are all now bilingual. Who said we needed Proposition 63, or anything else of the kind, here in California?

What I do best, and what I have been doin' in "Miss'sippi", Alabama, Louisiana, as well as in Georgia and other places like Kansas and Washington State is being a motivating, entertaining, insightful speaker about urban issues in education.

I work very well with teachers and administrators. Through the years I've worked with San Francisco and San Jose school systems as a consultant on issues that have to do with curriculum and bilingual and multicultural education. Lately, I have introduced humor as a force in helping us, as educators, really to set a tone and create a climate for the exchange of ideas about educational reform. We can laugh our way into accepting new ideas about serious issues in our profession.

You know, it's interesting that the people who are abusive to minorities have always used humor to mock people. Those of us who claim to be the friends of minorities are not as good at using humor as an ally. And I'd like to make a distinction between humor that

amuses and humor that abuses, let's enjoy ourselves while we take care of business at hand...you will find me a very sharp, entertaining, insightful speaker.

I have to talk fast, and you have to listen fast. Our time is very short here. Diversity, or how to make our society safer for differences, is my theme. There are some lessons about this issue from my past. When I attended schools in the city of New York I was about 11 years old. Having just arrived from Puerto Rico, my only language was Spanish. My teachers thought they knew exactly what they needed to do in order to prepare me for the future. So, the first thing they told me when I came from Puerto Rico was: "Learn English". So I said, "Si, si". Then, in the same vein, they came up with, "Forget Spanish". And interestingly enough, before I learned English I forgot Spanish, and soon, I was illiterate in two languages.

One of the things that we have to do in this business is to figure out how a good teacher, who means well, in a system that must prepare children for the world of work and for the world--as someone else put it before me--becoming good citizens in a democratic society is how to distinguish when teachers are basically wrong, and when they tend to be right. Because when they told me to learn English, they were right on target because anybody who says you can get along without English in the United States of America is a fool! English has replaced German as a language of science and French as the language of diplomacy. It is the lingua franca; it is a most useful instrument in the world as the foreign language which makes it possible for people to have access to the world of technology. But more importantly, it's the language of American citizens that binds us together. And therefore, when she said "Speak English" she was right.

But you know something? When they said "Forget Spanish", they were wrong, because you cannot argue in the name of education that it's better to know less than more. So in that sense, my problem with educators is that teachers and school systems who are very good about giving minorities advice about what students need to do in order to make it, is that often they're only half right.

We have to figure out how we can get teachers to be right a lot more often. And because of that, you need the insight of some of us

who are kind of freelance troublemakers in the circuit of the exchange of ideas.

My accent is a "Spanglish" one. And it comes out of an interesting social reality. How I managed to learn to speak middle-class English is very revealing, since I come from what can best be described as a troubled background. My mother had five children, about a fourth grade education and she hails from a rural background in Puerto Rico. She migrated, with my father, to New York City, and later with my stepfather to Chicago. My father is an alcoholic. He became an automobile mechanic, but did not do well economically. My mother is a very white, European-looking Puerto Rican woman. My father is a very Afro, Black-looking Puerto Rican man. And although they weren't supposed to...they did!

And they had some of the most <u>beautiful</u> children you have ever seen.

We can talk about Black being beautiful now; but we lived at a time when the concept of Black being beautiful was not there. Women were not pushing back the night. Handicapped people did not have a parking space. In a sense, the gifted were not recognized as a unique possible track. Gay people were not, at least collectively, deciding that somehow the society had to be at least more humane about how they would be treated as people. Senior citizens were not organized as Grey Panthers. Even though I look at myself now, and think of myself as an attractive human being, I remember a time when I actually thought that <u>I</u> was ugly; if you can believe that.

I came out of a poor background and my language reflected growing up on public welfare...Let me dramatize what I mean to say about how poor we were by telling you a true story from my past.

I used to live with my folks on the West Side of Chicago on Harrison Street and Independence Boulevard, near the Eisenhower Expressway. Not long after we moved into our little apartment, someone forced the door and broke into our home. Because I spoke the best English in our family, I was told by my mom to call the police and report the crime. And so I called. After all, I had watched television and remembered "Dragnet", you know what I mean. I knew that they would come out and investigate and solve the problem.

I called the police and said, "I want to report a robbery". And the desk sergeant said, on the other line, "No you don't". I said, "What do I have to report?" He said, "A break-in." "Okay", I said, "I want to report a break-in." I said, "Could you send somebody to investigate?" He said, "No, we won't". I said, "Why not?" He asked, "What did the thieves take?" I started to think about what they took. And it dawned on me that while they had gone all through our things, and had made a big mess, that they hadn't taken anything!

If you think being a victim is bad when they take the stuff that you really treasure, you are a real victim when they break into your house and don't take anything. We were poor!

I lived in poverty; my vocabulary skills were poor; I was illiterate in two languages; I never earned a grade higher than a "D" in English. I did poorly in Math and I was a high school dropout. Need I tell you about my poor self-esteem? But then I met Mary Yamazaki, a Seventh-Day Adventist woman, and she got me turned around, and put me on the right track.

Mary Yamazaki is a Japanese-American woman. I went to work for her at Hinsdale Hospital, just outside of Chicago. She became like a surrogate parent in the arena of education. She was a tiny lady with a long bony finger. She told me that I needed to finish my education. She helped me go to a boarding prep school, Broadview Academy in Lafox, Illinois. It was there that I learned middle-class English by memorizing the speeches of the preacher Peter Marshall, or the sermons of Billy Graham, or the political speeches of Jack Kennedy. And by doing that, I empowered myself with middle-class language skills. I learned, interestingly enough, often in spite of the school system, not because of it.

I shall never forget attending school at Broadview. Living in a dormitory meant taking showers with other boys! Six at a time, was not unusual. Looking at other young men naked was very revealing. I noticed young adolescents whose bodies did not have one scar. I remember looking at this dude, six foot two, gifted with a beautiful mop of blonde hair. (In those days I always wanted to have "good hair"). This young man was to me the epitome of what the society must project as a handsome man in the terms of the mainstream WASP environment. I looked at that individual, and there was not a scar on his body. As I kept looking he got nervous, and I said, "Don't worry, I'm just looking".

I had nine scars. I thought scars were part of growing up. It was through those kids in that academy that I learned middle-class ways. In that school I learned the art of public speaking. I always somehow knew how to read. I used to read biographies so as to not have to interact with people, whom I was convinced would not like me.

So, how did this Puerto Rican kid, Samuel Betances, from a broken home, on welfare, from a racially mixed background, with all of these scars, with not many resources, whose relatives own not one thing that others would want to steal --- eventually wind up at Harvard University? What happened? How was I able to earn my Masters and Doctorate there?

Basically I was intelligent, but I was incompetent when Mary Yamazaki intervened in my life. Because of her religious faith which made her believe that God could do all things, she said to me, "God has great work for you to do. But, you've got to prepare yourself". This person not only introduced me to the idea or the option of education, she also helped me to manage my money matters to save for my entrance fee at the academy. I met Mary Yamazaki when I went to work for her at Hinsdale, as an orderly in her Central Service Department. I was earning about one dollar an hour. I used to commute from the West side of Chicago to the suburb of Hinsdale. She knew that I could not save for my education, paying a big chunk of my income on train fare every day. So Mary Yamazaki fought with the housing administration at the hospital to let me live on the hospital grounds. Racist policies did not encourage Black and Latino lower level workers to find housing in the elite suburban hospital. But, Mary Yamazaki fought for me and won. In fact, she got the hospital to allow me to share a room with six Korean students. They spoke very little English, and I didn't speak any Korean, but we slept in the same room -- we snored in the same language, I guess. So that's how it began for me, the road to success in the educational arena. I had someone in my corner fighting for me in order to remove obstacles that the system puts in the way; while she fought with me, so that I could be the best that I could be by taking advantage of the new opportunities.

Thinking about my Korean roommates brings the thought to me about new immigrants and success in education. While many of the newcomers are poor and from the "Third World", others are not.

Some are not poor; even if they happened to be from the third world. The Filipinos, the Hindus, the Koreans, and some Vietnamese...many of them come through a process known as select immigration. Educators give a wrong meaning to their achievement in education. Teachers, begging to take credit for what these students are able to achieve in schools, their achievements often having to do with what these students bring from their native culture. Yet, teachers will often look down on U.S. minority students and scold them, telling them "Why can't you be like these new kids?" The thing is that "these new kids" are the way they are precisely because they did not go through our system.

I took my children to do a little homework at Northeastern Illinois University, and I said, "Who do you think comes to Northeastern?" And my daughter looks at me and says, "Koreans". And they are less than one percent of the population of the university, but they seemed to be the majority of the people who used the library at night and on weekends.

Interestingly enough, now that Asians are doing very well, MIT and Stanford want to put a cap and a limit on how many Asians they will accept. So while the Asians go about doing what they are supposed to be doing to achieve in education, they now may be facing what Jews experienced for a long time. The core society will put some obstacle in their way to limit their success rate in the society. Stephen Steinberg in his book, The Ethnic Myth, has documented how testing and the process of conducting entrance interviews were put into practice at Harvard when Jews were getting into that elite university in greater numbers than the core society felt prudent. Testing as a process was introduced to limit the entry of Jews into Harvard. Some new criteria will no doubt be introduced soon to limit Asian progress. It seems that the core society wants the best and the brightest to succeed in education as long as these talented students are not the racial minority in our time; as they were not to be from a religious minority group many years ago.

Let's stop comparing minority young people in the U.S. with people who come through a select immigration process. Let's ask the question: Are there people like Samuel Betances, who are high school dropouts in places like the West Side of Chicago, who are Harvard material? How do we find them and develop them to reach their full potential?

For me the opportunity came as a result of a national tragedy. Through Mary Yamazaki's effort I had graduated from college. I didn't have the best grades; but I got through the B.A. When Martin Luther King was assassinated, Harvard was embarrassed that they did not have many Blacks and Hispanics. In order to honor Dr. King, Harvard recruited minority men and women. Recruiters, like Beatrice Miller, were to find people working in the cities for positive social change and to have them apply to enter Harvard to do graduate work. When I got to Harvard I found that the biggest problem in going to a place like Harvard was getting in.

Once we got in, sure we had some responsibility but we could meet the responsibility. We were able to create networks of interest, not of color, in order to achieve certain goals. Now, I did not graduate cum laude or summa cum laude, but I graduated. There were times when we had to read a book a day, a paperback book, just to get ready for certain classes. But, we did it!

You know what I'm sayin--we've got to stop this nonsense that says minority people lack the intelligence to succeed. What we see is that doors are not open enough. And when the doors open in places like UCLA, and other places like this one, you have people in staff and faculty positions who do not know how to work with people like myself.

What we need to do is to provide incentives for minorities. Meaning, we can say to them, "Hey, we know that you have come here with some deficits..." I don't even know the word to use to describe the things they lack. We could say educationally, whatever,...but you know, I tell my students, if you read two extra books, your letter grade is going to go higher. This is an incentive. We can create incentives. It takes a little extra work, but if we're in this business about equity and excellence, then we've got to do some of that. Also, don't forget that one of the things that minority people experience in the U.S. is rejection. Don't talk about academic and testing issues impacting minority young people and not talk about rejection. Many minority young people have experienced and are experiencing rejection. They have internalized a negative vision of themselves. They think there's something wrong with their eyes. Or that they're ugly, or that they have been cursed by God or something. Somewhere along the line, when we talk about making schools work for underachieving minorities, they've got to empower those children to reject rejection. Not to reject themselves. And that

means that you need to hire people in those universities that not only look like those minorities, but who have a track record for a conscious experience of battling rejection. Then you can really have role models. I don't mean finding some black scholar who does not relate to the black experience. I'm talking about finding some black scholar that relates to the black experience and who may not be as published and polished academically, but who may, in fact, be published and polished in the ability to empower whites and blacks in those institutions to learn how to be extensions of those things that univeralize the human spirit.

At one time I thought there was something wrong with our hair. We need folks to talk to students about the way they thought about themselves before capturing a positive vision of their real worth. We need faculty members and counselors to teach by illustrating, and confessing how wrong they were not to value themselves. Some of us wanted to cook our hair. Remember the days. I used to cut my hair real short and get a skull cap and put some Posner products on my very short hair, and sleep real stiff. The next day I would remove my cap, and my pressed hair resembled the "good hair" that I so desperately wanted. We were like shadows of what we could not be. How often I hid in the shadows of bus stop signs so I wouldn't get darker from the sun. There's nothing wrong with our hair. It's the meaning that society puts on hair. It's just like we take a piece of cloth and we call it a handkerchief, and it collects waste, and we blow our nose into it. Or we can take a piece of cloth and it can be a flag, and we salute it. The meaning is not in the cloth. The meaning is in the culture. And unfortunately, we live in a culture that says that some groups are handkerchiefs, and some groups are flags, and what we've got to teach those young people by simple illustrations like the one I am using is, that in God's sight, we are all flags, and if we are good enough for God, then we are good enough for America!

We must confront the national dilemma that says to students be thankful and proud that you are an American. But, what do we tell an American Indian to be thankful for on the eve of the Thanksgiving holiday season? The fact is that some people see the society as hostile and others see it as a host society. When we teach those who experience life as hostile to be thankful from the perspective of those who experience it as host, we've got a problem.

In Puerto Rico, the Americans came. They said, "We're going to get rid of the Spaniards". And they did. So we said, "Hooray for the Americans." And then the Americans stayed. On the eve of World War I, they said that we are now American citizens. So we became American citizens.

So we come to this society, and like the American Indians -- the American Indians were not made citizens to give them access to power, they were made citizens so that they wouldn't sign treaties. So citizenship was made to conquer people, not to liberate people.

For black Americans to become citizens after the Civil War meant the end of slavery. Citizenship became a plus for blacks. To be a teacher from a Greek, Polish, Ukranian, Lithuanian, Armenian background is to view becoming a citizen always as a blessing. It's hard to imagine if you look at the issue of citizenship as a stride toward freedom and/or the end of persecution and oppression, why some students would not value citizenship; why some students walk around with what appears to be a chauvinistic cultural chip on their shoulder.

The society portrays Mexican-Americans in the media as though they came to this country last night, and illegally. Mexican-Americans or Chicanos didn't come to this country as much as this country, through conquest, took over what used to be Mexico. So if you tell a Mexican-American "go back where you came from", and if they took you up on it, they would go back to Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado.....

Don't forget, in your research agenda to focus on the role of teachers and educators who come to the challenge of teaching minorities from dominant/host society enclaves. For these instructors face the challenge of educating our people to accomplish two things: to (a) empower them with skills of going into the world of work, and (b) at the same time, with the skills to reject rejection. So that the minority students do not put a negative meaning on their hair, on their Negroid or dark skin features, because that's not the problem. The problem has to do with meaning making. Black folks came up with a beautiful idea when they declared that "black is beautiful", which did not mean that white was ugly. When black people reached the conclusion that indeed black was beautiful they decided to let their hair grow. They knew that the problem did not have to do with their hair; but, with the meaning that was put in

their hair. Blacks made a political statement with their hair. The "Afro" was born. I'm not talking about the "natural", I'm talking about the "Afro". I remember Barbara Sizemore with an "Afro", she looked bad.

And, if you sat behind someone with an "Afro" you couldn't see. And you better not say anything either, man. In those days blacks had their African dashiki's from Hong Kong, and everything...you understand?

Japan. I've been there four times in the last five years, and I'm going back next year and I'm taking my twin boys. I don't know if my daughter wants to go; she prefers to visit England because Wham comes from there, I don't know what that means. I think Wham is a rock group.

Japan. When I watch people look to Japan, it scares me. Because I've been to Japan, and let me tell you, Japan is full of Japanese people. Now how in the world do you find solutions for a country that's multi-cultural from a country that's homogeneous? That worries me. It worries me because their assumptions and their cultural base are just different. You realize there are more black people living in the United States than there are people in the country of Canada. We've got more than 20 million Americans of Italian descent. We've got in Chicago more than 1 million Americans of Polish descent. I mean the United States is now the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

When you put it all together with the Scandinavian, the French and the Danes and the Norwegians, and you put together those Germans and Protestants and Catholics, and you put those Greeks...Listen, when you put it all together, this is a country of multi-cultural diversity where too many groups are viewed as handkerchiefs and some of them are blouses and some of them are viewed as towels, and some of them...When you take a look at all of that diversity, American education needs -- we need to educate our people on how to be consistently affirming the value of all of us together. And this is good for whites, good for blacks, and good for all of those of us who are in between.

Lastly, two points. And you're going to be patient with me in terms of the time factor because I'm good.....

The homework issue is first. In the American Educational Weekly a series of reports on Japan indicated how the Japanese woman parent goes and gets a text book so as to take lessons on how to tutor her child, because getting into college in Japan is so competitive.

Homework. Israel. I went to Israel a couple years ago. It was a very fascinating experience. I saw a lot of black-looking Jews there. In terms of homework for the newly arrived Jews from Morocco or Ethiopia, the students from Ben Gurion University of the Nagev earned their scholarships by living in the housing compounds of newcomers. The students from mainstream Israeli society help the newly arrived Jews because educational leaders in Israel know that the parents of Moroccan and Ethiopian Jews cannot help their own children. In Japan it is the mother who is the homework connection. In Israel, the students of Ben Gurion University are the tutors. In the U.S., at least for the middle class, it is we the parents who help.

My daughter is sixteen, my three children attend a public school system in the city of Chicago. My daughter came to me and she said, "Daddy, I need some work with my homework, and we're doing something on Shakespeare." I found out that she wanted to find out something on Shakespeare. I went to work with Dr. Dowd at New Haven, Connecticut, and while I was there I picked up some books on Shakespeare. We did a little bit of research; I helped her to do the three by five cards, how to do quotes, how to do the whole thing. We did a fantastic job and it brought me closer to my daughter.

We worked very hard on the task of her paper. When she took it to school the teacher liked it. The paper had the five sources required and the encyclopedia. The teacher looked at her and said, "This is fantastic." Then she called one of Cristina's classmates to the front of the class. His name is Pedro, whose parent had moved to Chicago from Mexico. She said, "Pedro, why did you copy from the encyclopedia? Why didn't you do what Cristina did?"

And I thought about that and I discussed it with my daughter, and guess what we found out? Pedro had plagiarized because the only resource that he had available to himself was, in fact, the encyclopedia.

Cristina Betances had the resources of her father, who for fifteen years had been a full professor in the teacher's college there in Chicago called Northeastern Illinois University.

Yes, Pedro was passing himself off as a student, when in reality he was taking credit for work he had not done. In a sense Pedro is a fraud. But his teacher was also a fraud. She was taking credit for work she had not done. She was saying, "Cristina did what I told her". Cristina did not do what she told her. Cristina did what the resources made available to her at home enabled her to do.

In many instances, the problems facing American urban education can be understood in this type of illustration. Kids are not competing with other kids; but social class families are competing with social class families. Love in each family can be constant and abundant; but, if the class resources are very uneven the outcome in the area of achievement will also be uneven.

Here in California there is much made about the business initiatives to adopt-a-school program. What we ought to do is to ask businesses to do something very simple. Hire some of the kids that are doing very well in urban schools to become the tutors of those students who are not doing very well. Let's establish communal homework centers in our school districts. From Monday through Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in selected places throughout our cities, there will be places where young people can get help with their homework. A particular business can adopt a school by paying the wages of the tutors. The tutors can wear the logos of the sponsoring company on sweat shirts provided by the company. Instead of flipping hamburgers, young people can flip ideas and provide help to those who need it. The students who tutor will become stronger in the process. Those who are earning "C's" can earn "A's". The achievement rate of all involved goes up. There are a lot of parents out there who love their children, but who cannot help them with their homework.

Teachers are always dumping on parents, saying they don't care. If you care and you don't know the new math and you don't know the science, even if you show up at school, even if you create the climate, even if you turn the television off, even if you get them to bed on time, those kids are still in need of technical assistance with the know-how in terms of being competitive with the curriculum of the school system.

And so what I'm saying to you is, we need to take some of those young people, hire them to teach other young people, give those kids jobs, give them responsibility. If parents know that there is a center that they can go to and send their kids where the kids are going to be safe, the parents will send those kids to get the help they need. So that they don't have to plagiarize, or go out to the streets and write their names with spray paint on the walls instead of with degrees like the rest of us.

So. Here is my suggestion. Teachers are always saying parents don't care. But that's because they bring that set of biases that we heard about on welfare and all of that other stuff. I'm saying to you that there are parents who love their children who need work, and I'm saying we need to ask businesses to do more than to simply give a tour to the class of their business, or to provide a computer to a school. And that's what they're doing to sponsor a school. Let's see if we can get the teachers' unions, get the NEA, and some of these -- the AFT -- to go along and build with principals and parents,' groups and businesses' communal homework centers so that those kids can get help in their neighborhoods in the evenings, Monday through Thursday. And if the kids are too young and you can't hire them, let them give them for so many hours of tutoring a personal computer. Or some other kind of incentive. But, don't build a volunteer tutoring program. They don't work.

My point is this. My mother loved me, but she could not help me with my homework. I love my daughter, I could help her with part of her homework, but in her math and in her science, I cannot help her. Let's figure out how we can take those kids and build the kind of base that the homework centers can give us.

Let it be said that in Japan the homework connection is the mother; in Israel it is the college student; and in middle-class America it is the parents. In the cities, the homework connections are the communal homework centers.

And really lastly, the dropout issue. When they say that Hispanics don't care about education and point to our high dropout rate, don't believe that we don't value education. Take another look at the meaning that's being put on the statistics. It's a big lie that we don't value education. Our dropout rate is 55 percent. Now that's not acceptable. But, damn it, for the children of white immigrants,

the dropout rate was 94 percent. The difference is that they had stolen the continent from the Indians -- and that's better than welfare, that's a lot of land -- the difference was that when they came with a strong back and willingness to work they could work. The difference was that you could build a Bank of America that was really the bank of Italy - when those Sicilians came and established a, what is that place? Fisherman's Wharf was established by immigrants who did not speak English. The Italians went fishing and cooked fish over there...The point is that when those people came with a strong back and willingness to work, they could get into the job market so that while the schools rejected them or did not accept them, the economy did. So they had high dropout rate of 94 percent, but a zero dropout problem.

Today when my people come to this society, with the same intelligence in the farming area, we face agribusiness. And consequently, it's not that we lack intelligence or interest, it's that we lack opportunity. When the schools reject us, so does the economy. Because when those people came, you know, you could talk to the cows in Swedish and they give you milk. You could talk to the corn in German and it would grow. But we don't face the corn or the cows, we face the computer.

It's not that we don't value education, but that there is myth that says white people made it through education. Not true. If you check back in your families, your parents had less education than you did. Your grandparents had less education than they did. And the further you go back, the less formal schooling. My friends, what that means is that because they were able to get into the economy without formal education, you and I were able to get, and our children are going to get, more. What am I saying? The dropout problem and the dropout rate is not that we lack values, but that the economy has changed. We do our chief work in Japan, in Korea, even in Puerto Rico. Did you know that 75 percent of the bras that are sold in the U.S. are manufactured in Puerto Rico? Puerto Rico's a lot closer to your heart than you realize.

So. Let's think a lot about these issues, and, hey! Why don't all of us say, part of the agenda must be: How do we take racism and sexism and intolerance, and pow! Right in the kisser, as we make this country safer and stronger and freer than when we found her. Right on, America!